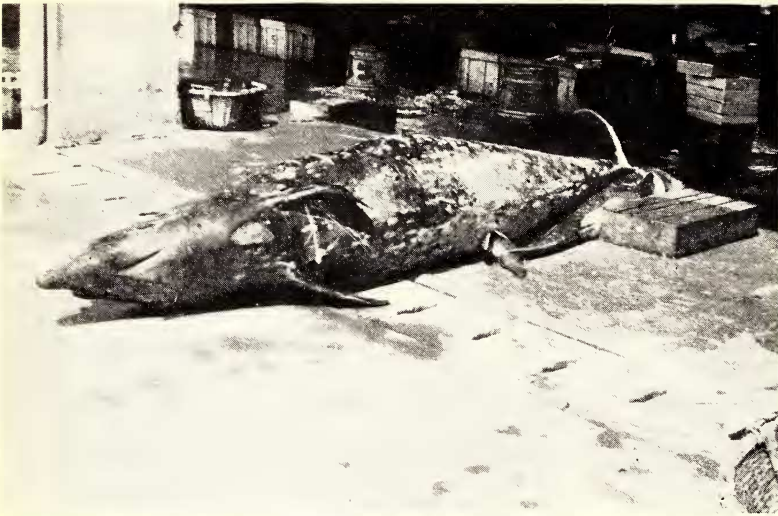


Mesoplodon densirostris (Blainville), adult male



Whole animal, ventral view.



Dorsal view. Note the enormous dental eminences and teeth.



Ventral view. Note the V-shaped gular groove.

Photos :

Courtesy Yaichiro Okada

[B. B. Osmaston (1907, A Visit to Barren Island in the Andamans, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 18 : 357-9) recorded that goats on Barren Island drink salt water, and William Beebe (1947, BOOK OF BAYS) speaks of goats on Guadalupe Island that drink sea-water and eat kelp exposed at low tide. In this connection reference may also be made to Dr. Alain Bombard who, in his lone venture across the Atlantic, sustained life for two months on sea-water (not more than one and a half pints per day), plankton collected with a small net trailed behind his craft, and such fish as he caught from time to time (1956, Alain Bombard: THE BOMBARD STORY. Penguin Books).—EDS.]

5. OCCURRENCE OF BLAINVILLE'S BEAKED-WHALE [*MESOPLODON DENSIROSTRIS* (BLAINVILLE)] IN THE INDIAN OCEAN¹

(With one plate and two text-figures)

Dr. Yaichiro Okada, Director of the Fisheries Research Laboratory, Tokai University, Shizuako, Japan, sent me some photographs of a beaked-whale for determination. The specimen had been caught about the middle of June 1963 in the Indian Ocean, in the vicinity of the Seychelle Islands, 5° S. × 65° E., by one of the Japanese Tuna fleets of the Faiyō Fishing Company operating in the Indian Ocean.

The photographs clearly indicated that the specimen was an example of an adult male Blainville's Beaked-Whale, *Mesoplodon densirostris* (Blainville), one of the least recorded members of the genus. Unfortunately, the specimen was cut up for food, but the photographs leave no doubt of its identity.

Mesoplodon densirostris is one of the rarer species of the genus *Mesoplodon*; only twelve or thirteen specimens have been recorded since it was first described in 1817, and that from a mere fragment of the rostrum measuring only 225 mm., without locality. This, the type, is in the Paris Museum. In addition, a skull obtained in the Seychelle Islands in 1839 is also in the same museum.

The majority of the known specimens have been recorded from the Atlantic coasts of North America, including Canada. One stranded in eastern Australian waters (Queensland) and another on Lord Howe Island. Three specimens have been recorded from South Africa.

¹ The author is engaged on a revision of the genus *Mesoplodon*.

Blanford (1888-91 : 573) recorded no Ziphioids as definitely occurring within the limits of his FAUNA, but suggested the possible occurrence of *Ziphius cavirostris* Cuvier and *Mesoplodon densirostris* (Blainville) in India Seas. The former ranges very widely and has been caught or stranded in widely separated parts of the world, between the northern and southern tropics.

The Ziphiidae comprise a family of smaller whales, *Ziphius*, *Hyperödon*, *Mesoplodon*, *Berardius*, and *Tasmacetus*. With the exception of *Tasmacetus*, the other four genera have one (*Ziphius*, *Hyperödon*, and *Mesoplodon*) or two (*Berardius*) pairs of large mandibular teeth only, situated either at the extremity of the rami (one in each) or at some distance behind the tip, near or at the posterior union of the mandibular symphysis. With the exception of *Berardius*, the males alone erupt these mandibular teeth. The shape of the teeth is characteristic of the species. These functional teeth of the males are used as weapons of offence or defence in much the same manner as a boar uses its tusks. The males fight much among themselves and, at times, inflict severe linear scars on each other. In the females the corresponding teeth are present in the alveoli but are

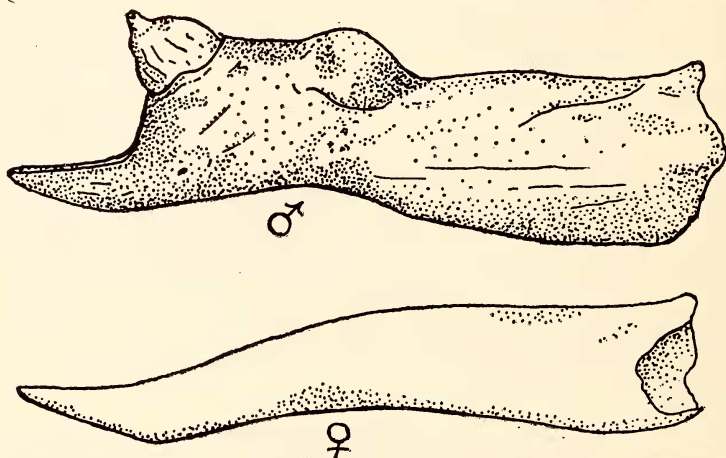


Fig. 1. Rami of *Mesoplodon densirostris* (Blainville)

Top : male ; bottom : female

normally not erupted. Because of the close similarity in external form the females of *Mesoplodon* are sometimes difficult to determine correctly, when in the flesh.

In the genera *Ziphius*, *Hyperödon*, and *Tasmacetus* the teeth are circular or ellipsoid in transverse section but in *Mesoplodon* and *Berardius* the teeth are strongly, laterally compressed. In *Tasmacetus*

functional teeth are present in both jaws. Rudimentary teeth occasionally occur in some of the genera, but they are normally not socketed in alveoli.

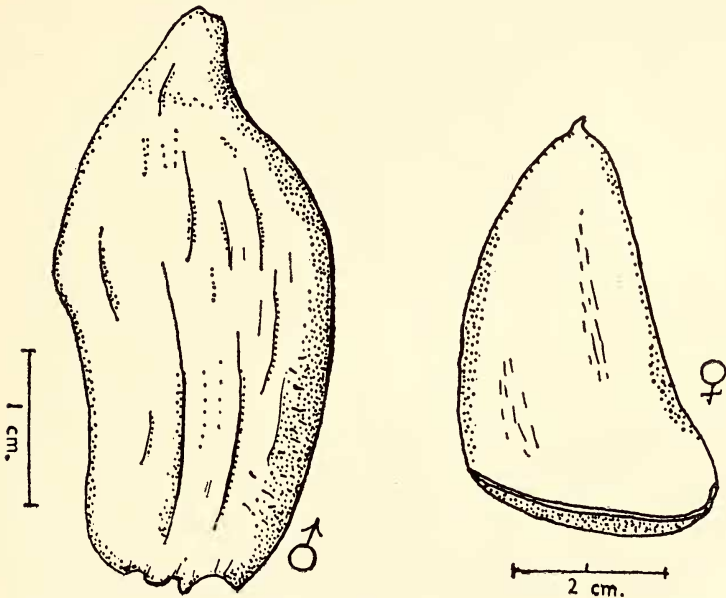


Fig. 2. Teeth of *Mesoplodon densirostris* (Blainville)
Left : male ; Right : female

The genus *Mesoplodon* comprises eight species not exceeding 6 metres (20 ft.). Some are confined to the Northern Hemisphere while others are restricted to the Southern Hemisphere, but occasionally one or the other of the species may be found a long way from its known territorial waters. Very little is known of the habits and movements of the various species. Of all the species *M. densirostris* appears to visit intertropical waters more frequently than do any of the others.

Blainville's Beaked-Whale. *Mesoplodon densirostris* (Blainv.)

Delphinus densirostris Blainville, 1817, *Nouv. Dict. Hist. Nat.*, 2nd ed., 9 : 178.
(Type loc. unknown.)

Mesoplodon densirostris Flower, 1872, *Trans. Zool. Soc. Lond.* 8 : 11.

Description. Head and body fusiform, deepest in the middle, strongly compressed caudally. Head moderate, not well defined by a nuchal depression; rostrum prominent, subacute, posteriorly concealed in lateral view between the dental eminences of the mandibles carrying the teeth; mandible slightly longer than the rostrum. Mandibular teeth in male large, attaining a vertical height of 150 mm., antero-

posterior width 85 mm. and a lateral diameter of 44 mm., teeth obliquely ovate-lanceolate in shape, with furrows and striae on the lateral faces; obliquely set in the jaw with the apex directed forwards. In the female, teeth unerupted, somewhat ligulate in shape with a minute apical mucro or cusp; vertical height 54 mm., antero-posterior width 30 mm., at base; lateral diameter 7 mm. (There is no bony eminence for the tooth.) Blowhole crescentic, median. Eye moderately large. Two throat grooves present, forming an open V, following the angle of the diverging rami. Flippers moderate, subacute; flukes moderately large with no median notch; lobes slightly falcate. Dorsal fin nearer the caudal, well behind the centre of the body, triangular or slightly falcate.

Size. No specimen exceeding 4.4 metres (14 ft. 8 in.) has been recorded (male). *M. densirostris* appears to be the smallest member of the genus. Skull length reaching 770 mm. by 494 mm. at the widest.

Colour. Nearly completely black. Occasionally some lighter spots ventrally between the flippers and paler around the anal and genital openings. Undersurface lighter, greyish or whitish. In males the body is frequently covered with criss-cross 'battle scars' made by the teeth of the opponents. Such scars are linear and may vary from a few centimetres to over a metre in length. In addition, the body of both sexes often bears oval or elliptical scars scattered over the body, but particularly in the vicinity of the vent. These scars are often caused by parasitic and epizoid animals. However, it must be remembered that the colour of cetaceans alters very rapidly after stranding and the skin turns black.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Y. Okada for his kind permission to reproduce the photographs accompanying this article.

17, CLARKE STREET,
KHANDALLAH,
WELLINGTON N. 5,
NEW ZEALAND,
November 18, 1963.

CHARLES McCANN

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6. OCCURRENCE OF THE WHITERUMPED SWIFT [*APUS PACIFICUS* (LATHAM)] AT HINGOLGADH, JASDAN, GUJARAT

On 25 August 1963 while watching the small flock of House Swifts (*Apus affinis*) which are always wheeling about this ancient fort on a hill which is over a 1000 feet high and rises out conspicuously from the surrounding low hills and plain, I saw a single Whiterumped Swift. This bird wheeled about at great speed for a few minutes before disappearing again. I can trace no previous record of its occurrence in Gujarat.

THE PALACE,

JASDAN,

August 27, 1963.

YUVRAJ SHIVRAJKUMAR

7. OCCURRENCE OF THE LARGE WHITERUMPED SWIFT [*APUS PACIFICUS LEUCONYX* (BLYTH)] IN BOMBAY

On 11 November 1957, Bombay city was threatened by a storm which failed to show up, but two swifts *Apus pacificus* and *Apus affinis* were blown into houses facing the sea at Walkeshwar and Colaba respectively. The Regional Meteorological Centre stated that the storm initially formed as a depression in the south-east Arabian Sea and moved in a north-north-easterly direction. The birds were sent to Br. A. Navarro of St. Xavier's High School, who in his turn